

# The Rochester Flood Control Project, 10 Years After, Effective Mitigation

## The City's Role

# Flood Plans Studied / Discussed

- As far back as 1952
- Major emphasis after 1960's floods
- 1976 / 78 Final plans for combined NRCS, Corps project developed

# Plan Support / Sponsorship

- Local community support both inside and outside of Rochester was key factor in getting Congressional and local legislative support
- Some more environmentally friendly plans involving more reservoirs were opposed due to agricultural impacts
- Local sponsors for the NRCS reservoir plan were the City, Olmsted County and the Olmsted SWCD. The City was local sponsor for the Corps project

# Project Cost Information

- Final costs were approximately \$97 M for the Corps project and \$18M for the SCS project
- City residents authorized a 1% sales tax in 1982 and Legislature approved in 1983. Collected for flood control purposes through 1992. Over \$25 M collected
- Federal and Local cost sharing for aesthetics and recreation were a key



# NRCS Reservoir Project

- City was the land acquisition agency. Acquired 2,500 acres at the 7 sites, including the 1,500 acre Chester Woods Reservoir / Park
- Worked with DNR to stock fish at 3 reservoirs (plan only required one site) for recreational access
- Acquired enough land to create prime wildlife / bird sanctuary areas
- Federal NRCS Cost Sharing made available for Chester Woods County Park

# Corps Project

- City retained landscape architect to provide recommendations
- Formed citizens task force to review plans and recommend aesthetic and recreational improvements
- Emphasized long term nature of the project
- Reviewed projects in other communities

# “ROCHESTER FLOOD CONTROL PROJECT – KEY SUCCESS FACTORS”

- Strong local and area support (even prior to 1978)
- The 1978 flood dramatically showed the need
- Undying persistence of local elected officials to secure a solution
- City developed strong lobbying connections to Congress and Federal Agencies

# “ROCHESTER FLOOD CONTROL PROJECT – KEY SUCCESS FACTORS” (CONT.)

- Congressional Champions (Durenberger, Oberstar, Penny, Erdahl)
- Regular contacts to Washington to secure a high project priority
- Strong partnership approach of Corps and NRCS with local sponsors
- Corps project manager served as an advocate for the City



# “ROCHESTER FLOOD CONTROL PROJECT – KEY SUCCESS FACTORS” (CONT.)

- Federal cost sharing for recreation and aesthetics ( a good investment)
- Local sponsors committed to recreation, aesthetics and wildlife enhancement
- A sufficient local budget for recreation and aesthetics (sales tax)
- Good relations between the City and affected property owners (fair treatment)
- The final 5% changed it from a plumbing project to a plum

# Project Results

- Flood plain reduced to in channel – Community and economy protected
- 2000 homes and businesses removed from the floodplain
- Community flood insurance costs reduced
- Project created a linked network of trails and parks
- Over 1.3 million trail-users annually
- New Trail Corridor Developments; Civic Center expansions, Government center Riverside School, Art Center, Rivers Edge Apts., Elton Hills Business Park and other numerous new commercial and residential uses
- PEACE OF MIND DURING RAINFALL EVENTS

# Corps project design items

- 10 miles of trailways in linear park corridor
- Underpasses for bikepaths under streets wherever feasible (only 3 exceptions) \$150K each
- Trail passes under 16 streets, 2 major highways, 2 railroad bridges
- Trail shelters, river access points, canoe launches, parking facilities

# Corps project design items (cont.)

- Trailways connect most of the major park facilities, schools, downtown area
- Concrete walls – used textured rib pattern, varied wall height where possible
- Used sod over riprap, interlocking block, and concrete walls to reduce riprap (firsts for Minnesota)
- Value engineering to reduce channelization where possible



# Corps project design items (cont.)

- Used distinctive railing design and lighting for continuity / theme
- Acquired sufficient right of way to allow for landscaping buffer
- Pedestrian bridges for connections
- Acquired homes to eliminate levee in one area

# Corps project design items (cont.)

- Planted over 2000 trees and 2000 shrubs
- Projects require substantial annual maintenance costs



Picnic Shelter near Rec. Center , north of Elton Hills Drive





## Bike Trail along flood control project near Elton Hills Drive





## Lighting and Landscaping along trail adjacent to flood control project south of Elton Hills Drive





Water (fishing) access south of Elton Hills Drive





Water access near confluence of Zumbro River and Cascade Creek  
( note low water condition due to drought)





Bike / Pedestrian Trail bridge over Cascade Creek near  
confluence of Zumbro River (note low water condition of  
Cascade Creek)





Rivers Edge Affordable Housing Development adjacent to  
flood control project





View of flood control wall adjacent to MCC ( Notice new Art Center taking advantage of river amenities)





Flood walls behind MCC





# Open Space Corridor adjacent to flood control project in Slatterly Park





# Waterfall and decorative flood control wall downtown behind Gov't Center

